

PEQUOT TRAILS

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY IN THE SPRING, SUMMER, FALL AND WINTER
BY THE PEQUOT-SEPOS WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, MYSTIC, CONNECTICUT

Volume V

Summer, 1953

Number 2

Annual Meeting To Be Held Sunday, July 19

Schedule of Events

EIGHTH ANNUAL MEETING

Where?	Pequot-sepos Wildlife Sanctuary - Mystic, Conn.
When?	Sunday evening, July 19 - Rain or shine
What Time?	Business Meeting 5:30 p. m. Followed by picnic supper and entertainment.
About the Supper!	Members bring their own. The Sanctuary will supply the dessert, coffee, and cold drinks.
About the Program!	Walt Disney's "Beaver Valley" and "Nature's Half Acre."
What Must I Do?	Plan now to attend. Fill in and return the enclosed post card so it reaches us by July 16.

Films and Supper Special Features At Annual Meeting

The eighth annual meeting of the Pequot-sepos Wildlife Sanctuary will be held at the Sanctuary on Sunday evening July 19. All signs point to this being our most interesting meeting to date. Every effort is being made to make it a fast-moving streamlined affair with a short business meeting, refreshments, and an outstanding entertainment.

Here's what we have planned for you! The business meeting will start at 5:30 at which time we will elect three new trustees to our Board. There will also be short reports by committee chairmen and our curator. Following this meeting, which should take no longer than 45 minutes, you will be free to enjoy your own picnic supper. We will supply you with hot and cold drinks and dessert - you bring the rest. Immediately following the supper we will show you two wonderful films - Walt Disney's "Beaver Valley" and "Nature's Half Acre." Yes, we will show them BOTH starting at about 7 o'clock! Plan now to attend the entire evening's program. We know you will enjoy it. Please fill in the enclosed post card and mail it so it reaches us by Thursday, July 16. This will help us in our planning. THIS IS YOUR OFFICIAL NOTICE, PLAN NOW TO ATTEND.

Disney Films To Be Featured At Annual Meeting

Two of Walt Disney's outstanding nature films will be featured at the annual meeting on July 19. Both "Beaver Valley" and "Nature's Half Acre" will be shown. These films combine the best photographic endeavors of our country's leading wildlife photographers. Many of the scenes have been taken from the Audubon Screen Tours that we have sponsored locally. Mr. Disney has added a fine musical background and an authentic and interesting commentary - the kind that only Disney can provide.

Each of these films presents the story of the varied life in a small section of our country. By having so much film available, and through his superb technique, Mr. Disney has been able to present the ecological stories of natural communities.

This may be your last opportunity to see these films. If you are fortunate enough to have seen them in your local theater, you know that they are the type of films you would want to see over and over.

This special showing is made possible at considerable expense to the Sanctuary and through special lease from RKO Studios.

Norwich Students Win Poster Contest

Alfred Chmielecki, a senior at Norwich Free Academy, won the top prize of a U. S. Savings Bond in this year's conservation poster contest sponsored by the Sanctuary. First prize in the grade school division was won by Roberta Carlson of the Bishop School in Norwich. She was awarded ten dollars in cash.

Both second prize winners were New
(See CONTEST, P. 3)

Flash! Flash! Flash!

We need your return postal card just as soon as we can get it. Won't you take a moment right now to check the items on your card and drop it in the mail!

Thank You.

PEQUOT TRAILS

Published quarterly, Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter, by the Pequot-sepos Wildlife Sanctuary, Inc., Mystic, Conn.



Editors

Adele Erisman and
Thomas P. McElroy, Jr.

A Statement of Purpose:

We want this publication to be of the utmost service to you—to keep you informed concerning activities at the Sanctuary and in your community; to invite your participation in these activities; and to provide you with general articles of education and inspiration regarding conservation subjects. Won't you drop us a line and tell us what you would like to see published? We would appreciate it.

Adele Erisman Named Editor

You will note that with this issue Adele Erisman has been named as one of the editors of this bulletin. This is a particularly welcome addition for we know that her keen interest and knowledge of natural history, and her outstanding ability as a writer, will do much toward making this bulletin a more useful and inspirational publication.

Concerning Ecology

"ECOLOGY" is a word we're hearing more every day. We know it as the scientific term for a study of interrelationships of plants, animals and environment. But it is also more than that; it is a way of thinking as well, a whole viewpoint, - and a healthful antidote for that pervasive evil of our time, oversimplification.

Animal ecology includes the study of predation, a subject still charged with more heated emotional controversy than the facts would warrant. It deals with the interacting forces of climate, man's use of the land, fire and flood. And it even explores the psychology of animals, their behavior no longer dismissed as purely mechanical reaction.

Numbers are of great importance in ecological studies of animal populations. Factors that limit numbers are given roughly, in order of their importance, as climate and weather, food supply, shelter and breeding sites, predators.

As for predators, we are reminded that "to have the right enemies is a biological advantage". A classic example is the starvation of deer from overbrowsing their food supply when their natural predator, the mountain lion, has been eliminated.

There are endless examples of ecological thinking which is really a sort of "chain thinking". One that is used by biologists to illustrate interrelationships is the story of the farmer who asks why wood ducks have vanished from his pond where they were once common. The biologist traces their disappearance to the overtrapping of skunk by the farmer's son. Skunk feed greedily on snapping turtle eggs, digging them out of the soft ground where they are laid, and snapping turtles prey heavily on young duckling. Hence, the overtrapping of skunk helped to wipe out the wood duck. (This, like so many such examples, needs endless qualifying. Snapping turtles would be quite ineffective predators if water levels remained high enough so that the ducklings could get away).

When one develops the habit of this kind of "chain thinking", it becomes hard to fall into such a careless observation as one we heard recently. A man who knows trees (but perhaps not the forest) was talking about the leaf miner that defoliates grey birch this time of year, undoubtedly hastening the death of many of these trees. He said he wouldn't mind seeing the grey birch disappear, "Maybe it will make room for better species."

He was simply not an ecologist when he said that. He knew that grey birch is a "weed tree" from the standpoint of the forester, but he failed to consider its very useful niche in the plant community.

We know that it follows burns, pioneers on worn out soil, casts light shade where seedlings of better tree species find congenial shelter, adds its leaf decay to the soil and soon dies. But before the grey birch stump falls and disintegrates into soil, it often provides a home for our little black-capped chickadee, whose tiny bill is just strong enough to excavate a hole in the soft punky wood.

What then? Shall we not have fewer chickadees if we lose much grey birch? And chickadees are a great enemy of the larch case-bearer, while larch is a favorite tree of the forester. What will be the other repercussions on our welfare? Here is a simple start at seeing nature whole.

As we gain more ecological knowledge we come upon evidence of mutual aid among the lower forms of life. No longer is the old idea of "survival of the fittest" a satisfactory interpretation of evolution of species. Some examples of mutual aid may be mentioned here from time to time. Let us have YOUR observations.

The redstart, red-eyed vireo and ovenbird are probably the three commonest birds in Eastern United States.

New Fern Planting Started

Thanks to Mrs. R. O. Erisman and Mrs. Sylvester Butler, a fern and wildflower planting has been started on the yellow trail. The following ferns have been introduced. It's too soon to say they are established.

ebony spleenwort	rusty woodsia
oak	rattlesnake
crested wood	broad beech
fancy	maidenhair
silvery spleenwort	

These were found already growing in the Sanctuary:

rock polypody	Christmas
evergreen wood	royal
hay scented	marsh
cinnamon	interrupted
lady	sensitive
New York	bracken

We would like gifts of the ferns that grow in this region and are lacking in our collection.

A few wildflowers have also been added including:

white baneberry	saxifrage
downy yellow violet	star flower
May apple	nodding trillium
pipsissewa	trailing arbutus

Soil Conservation Service

The office of the Soil Conservation Service was established in Connecticut at about the same time this sanctuary was born. Some of our earliest members wrote to the governor urging him to sign the bill that authorized soil conservation districts. Now operating throughout the state, these districts are governed by boards of local farmers cooperating with their county office which provides technical assistance at the farmers' own requests and according to their needs.

At the start, the technician's advice was received with something less than enthusiasm; today it is sought and respected and has become a part of the farmers' own thinking, to the great benefit of our agriculture.

Many of our members today have a farm plan drawn up by the S.C.S. and many more of us have benefited from the wildlife program that enables the Service to provide certain trees and shrubs to cooperating landowners for the benefit of wildlife. Anyone interested can apply for such assistance through the Norwich office of the Soil Conservation Service. This federal agency works on a local level in the best democratic tradition of self rule. It deserves the firm support of every citizen interested in the welfare of the land.

CONTEST

(Cont. from P. 1)

London students. The ten-dollar second prize in the high school division was won by Carlyle Atkinson of New London High School. A five-dollar second prize was awarded Lala Lissanevitch of Bulkeley Jr. High in the elementary division.

Additional honorable mention awards in the high school division were won by Janet Lake of Norwich; Raymond Mosher, Barbara Yuhas and Paul Ressler of New London High; and Nancy Brooks and Helen Nester of Williams Memorial Institute. Honorable mention winners in the grade school division were Noreen Trant and Andre Noel of Broadway School, Mystic; Elaine Wasik and John Snurkowski of the Elizabeth St. School in Norwich; Louis Rilchotte of Bishop School, Norwich; and Sandra Jean Gregg of the Mystic Academy.

This year's contest attracted the largest number of entries - a total of 218. Judges for the contest were Ro-

bert Logan of the Connecticut College Art Department, Kenneth Bates, widely reknown artist, and the Sanctuary's curator, Thomas P. McElroy, Jr.

A Special "Thank You"

The Museum Committee wishes to extend a very special "thank you" to all those who helped with the exhibits in the trailside museum. Special thanks must go to Mrs. R.O. Erisman and to Mrs. Sylvester Butler for their very fine displays of wildflowers and evergreen ground covers; and to Miss Pauline Dederer for the educational exhibits of fossils and sea shells. We greatly appreciate the cooperation of the Connecticut College Zoology Department for the exhibits prepared by Mrs. Jones. Nor can we overlook the soil conservation exhibit prepared by the eighth grade students of Mrs. Edgar Harland of the Noank School. Also, a special "thank you" to Mrs. Passmore for her generous supply of conservation literature.

Question and Answer Column

We plan to revise our question and answer column believing that it will be an effective means of helping make this bulletin more interesting and useful. Here's how you can help. Send in questions about anything you want to know: about plants, animals, conservation in general. . . . What is it? . . . Why is it? . . . Where can it be found? . . . What can be done about it? . . . Why does it do this? . . . If we don't know the answers we'll do our best to find them. They will be published in the next issue of this bulletin. At the end of the year, a prize -- one of those 100% guaranteed birdhouses made in our own sanctuary workshop by our curator -- will go to the one who has sent in the most interesting question. You be the judges. Keep the questions short, please. Address them to Thomas P. McElroy, Jr., Curator, Pequotsepos Wildlife Sanctuary, Mystic, Conn.

Winners of 1953 Conservation Poster Contest

High School Class

Grade School Class

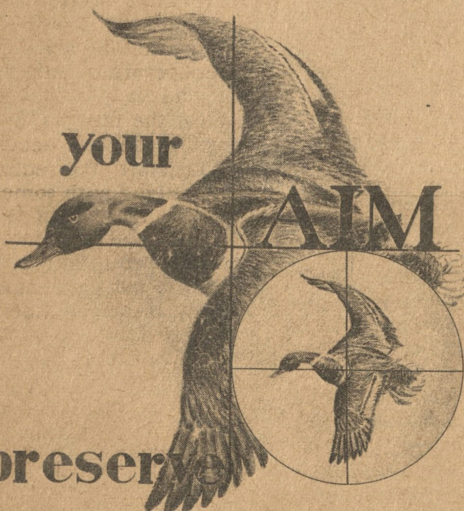
remember

your

AIM

preserve

WILDLIFE

PROTECT
OURFEATHERED
FRIENDS

Let's Look at Your Woodlot

Young evergreen stock is available every spring from the Forestry Department at West Willington at a cent or so a tree. It is an easy matter for a man using a mattock to plant 500 or more trees a day. Evergreens are much needed in this area to provide winter cover for wildlife and to furnish nesting sites. In addition they give the landowner a sound investment in Christmas trees and merchantable timber for the future. Only about twenty to thirty years in a good site will bring abundant returns. (A good site is an abandoned field). Besides, there is always a good feeling about planting trees.

And speaking of trees, Dr. Paul B. Sears, of Yale University, at a recent conservation meeting of Connecticut Garden Clubs, mentioned the forest conditions here in Connecticut as being miserably bad due to the constant cutting of the best trees and leaving the worst. What is the solution? Finding markets for deformed trees, for short lengths, for undesirable species, in order to make it pay to cut them out. At present they are used only for cordwood and nobody can afford selective cutting on that basis.

Dr. Sears told how the problem has been successfully solved in Wayne County, Kentucky, where industries were actually brought into the area to make use of the wasted trees. This has been so successful that at present only about half as much cutting needs to be done as was originally required to produce the same income. Some products manufactured from small pieces of less desirable woods were charcoal, chair arms, flooring in small t. and g. squares, and road blocks.

There are endless possibilities for utilizing the great variety of woods growing in our mixed hardwood stands. The State Forest and Park Commission has been trying to bring in such industry but it's not an easy thing to do. If it could be managed we would inevitably benefit from the increased productivity of farm woodlots which still constitute the greatest percentage of our wood resources and probably always will.

Incidentally, selective cutting in typical second-growth hardwood stands will, in most cases, benefit wildlife by creating sunny openings and edges where nothing exists now but a closed canopy.

A source of income that might help pay for forest improvement work right

now may have been overlooked in many of our second growth woodlots. There is a market for dead and dying red cedar trees of good size that have become shaded out by hardwoods. They are cut into seven foot lengths and, when they are four inches in diameter at the small end, are used as road posts and for a number of other purposes. Anyone who thinks he has a number of such trees can get in touch with George Cloutier, the farm forester at West Willington, Conn. He is the man to see about any contemplated forest cutting or improvement work.

Screen Tour Schedule

We are happy to be able to announce our 1953-54 Screen Tour Schedule at this early date. All dates are final and all Tours will be held at Buell Hall, Williams Memorial Institute, New London. However, complete details will be mailed to you at a later date. Do not order tickets from this advance announcement.

Screen Tour Schedule 1953-54

Sunday, November 8

Walter J. Breckenridge
"Paul Bunyan Country"

Tuesday, December 8

Walter H. Shackleton
"Oddities in Nature"

Thursday, January 21

Howard Cleaves
"Animals at Night in Color"

Sunday, February 21

Roger Tory Peterson
"Wild America"

Tuesday, April 6

Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr.
"In the Hills of Gold"

The Sanctuary Library

One of the Sanctuary's most urgent needs is to find some way to assure the continued expansion and development of our natural history library. While we welcome and encourage the gifts of books from your own shelves, we are in need of some financial means that will enable us to procure many of the fine editions that are now coming off the press. Especially needed at the moment are good field guides that students and visitors can use in their studies. If we could add one or two of these per month, it would help measurably. Unfortunately, our regular budget has never permitted us to expand our library facilities. Perhaps some of our readers would like to take this on as a special project. We would be glad to consult with you about it.

The Conn. Arboretum Establishes "Natural Area"

A 100 acre tract in The Connecticut Arboretum at Connecticut College has been set aside as a "natural area". Long range scientific studies of its plant and animal life were conducted in 1952 by students of the botany department under the direction of Dr. Richard Goodwin. Further studies will continue this summer under the supervision of Dr. William Niering.

This project is in line with the objectives of THE NATURE CONSERVANCY, a new and very important nationwide conservation organization, under the direction of scientists, with the purpose of preserving, through long-term lease and other feasible means, enough representative areas of wild land to assure future citizens of every region access to typical natural areas and complete information about them.

The time is growing short indeed to preserve undisturbed marsh, prairie, swamp, forest and desert areas. THE NATURAL CONSERVANCY is also interested in obtaining rights to study and protect in perpetuity other wild lands that may have been disturbed by man's use of ax, plow, fire, etc. Such lands will have many uses not only of a scientific nature but aesthetic and recreational as well.

Anyone owning a 100-acre tract or more who thinks it might be worth preserving can get in touch with Drs. Goodwin or Niering at the College.

Membership in THE NATURE CONSERVANCY will support this kind of work on a national scale. Interested persons should communicate with Mr. George Fell, 1940 Mintwood Place, N.W., Washington, D.C.

Scarcity of Bobolinks

The scarcity of bobolinks has been a growing concern to many of us. THE NEW YORKER magazine had an interesting article recently about changes in farm practices during the last fifteen years in which the author noted that these birds had become scarce in the wet meadows where they were formerly abundant. He found that the sound modern farming practice of early June mowing had destroyed so many nests that the few remaining birds now have been pushed into upland areas. Combined with this, there has been a steady diminution of rice growing areas along their southeastern migration route so that the bobolinks (often called rice birds) are now forced to congregate in small areas where they are illegally shot. Anyone who has ever heard the bobolink's bubbling song feels sad that it has become so rare.